

The Clipper Visits George Costa

By NANCY McCAFFERTY



George Costa

man's home is his castle. No one wants his castle scaled by uninvited guests. Life in the castle, especially for the elderly or infirm, should be arranged enough to make the little inconveniences of living in the castle appear inconsequential. But what does the lord of the manor do when there is ice on the driveway and no one available to clear it away? Or to have the mistress turn when she is ill and can't go to the local market for food? George Costa, a Duxbury patrolman for over 7 years, has seen the aftermath of intruders and the damage to the house-bound. In August of this year

he decided to form the Duxbury Caretaker Services, Inc., a business catering to the home owner in need of security and aid with the practicalities of life. Costa is careful to point out that his new enterprise is not a substitution for the police department but a supplement to their services. The 2 are separate entities and doesn't exclude the police department from their normal course of duties.

Duxbury Caretaker Services operates on a 24-hour basis. In addition to patrolling the perimeters of houses, the service offers interior checks, and house cleaning. It provides for a variety of needs and the home owner can take advantage of several plans structured to suit individual demands.

According to Costa, Duxbury has a reputation as a rich town and "Who would know better than thieves?" Anyone who goes away for whatever reason should notify the police that his house will be vacant. Costa also hopes that the home owner will notify him. "Duxbury has 3 cruisers and it doesn't take much to tie up 3 cruisers," says Costa. "The police must respond to life threatening situations first. If there is a choice between saving a life and saving a house, the life must always take priority."

There seem to be circumstances which thieves regard as opportunities. The most frequent break-ins occur at Christmas time when the house is full of gifts and when reports of weddings or funerals are in a newspaper and thus notice is given that a house will be unoccupied for several hours. Houses vacated for the winter are often easy prey for vandals or thieves. Last February there were 28 housebreaks in Duxbury and in the partially completed month of September of this year, there were 12.

Televisions and stereos are not the desired items to pilfer. They are too large and difficult to get rid of. Stamp and coin collections, silver, gold, jewelry, anything small and valuable are the articles most often stolen. Many times pillow cases are taken off the home owner's bed and used as a carrying bag. Drugs are also taken and in the case of vandalism, liquor is often stolen and consumed before the intruders damage the house.

The area of town chosen by thieves depends upon what they are looking for. If it is jewelry or gold, they usually pick the most expensive parts of town. Costa says the thieves work independently, rarely as a professional group, although there have been a few instances of that. They normally work one area at a time and then move on to another area. Sometimes there is a rapid shifting from one part of town to another but more often than not, there is a pattern.

Costa checked Duxbury and surrounding towns to see if there was any operation offering the services he intends to provide through Duxbury Caretaker Services. He found one in Plymouth which caters only to business establishments and one which handles Pilgrim I's security. He says he would like to keep his new enterprise exclusive to Duxbury and perhaps

several border streets. Right now he has 4 persons working for him part-time -- 4 he says he has known for a long time and trusts will do a good job. Any future help can expect extensive background checks and he says he will not consider anyone with the smallest spot on his record. He is in the process of getting the cars needed for the operation. They will be equipped with spotlights and communication radios and will be easily identifiable by their color and door markings.

When one looks at the list of services offered, it is hard to come up with anything Costa missed. For vacant homes, he will do exterior and interior checks as often as the home owner requests and will give "house condition" reports, particularly for those houses empty several weeks or months. For those who can't bear the thought of putting their pet in a kennel, Costa will feed, water, and exercise the animal. Checking up on elderly or ill relatives is also part of his service, as is home grocery delivery. Snow plowing, lawn mowing, and other outside work is available. Maid service and house cleaning is there too for those who don't want to or can't do it themselves. Costa says this service is also available to people who are moving and want to be certain they come into a clean house. He offers house sitting on an hourly basis and for more extended periods.

Costa is considering setting up an alarm center, which would accept private house alarms and private fire alarms. Through this center, the police and fire departments would be notified and requested to send a car to the scene. Costa would also send a Caretaker Services car. He thinks his business can offer help on an individual basis and respond quickly and efficiently. The feedback he gets to the alarm center idea will determine its implementation.

Duxbury Caretaker Services is bonded in accordance with state law. Its employees can act as witnesses in court and give written testimony to insurance companies. Costa, being a policeman, can make arrests. He says a policeman in his home town is really on duty 24 hours a day.

Before establishing the business Costa consulted an attorney and checked into the legalities of such a service. He then spoke to an accountant who estimated costs, prices, and profits. The next step was incorporation, recommended by the attorney. Then came the printing of flyers and advertising. Costa is pleased with the way his business is going and is already thinking of expansion at some point in the future.

Starting a new business is never easy. It involves risks. There must be present an ability to recognize a service or product which will appeal to enough people to make its establishment viable. And you need luck and timing. As for cost, there must be something telling him "By George, I've got it! By George, I've got it!"

People - Costa, George